Lawnmower and Other Summer Tool Tips

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Lawnmower Statistics

- Injuries treated in emergency room (ER) nearly doubled in past twenty years.
  - In 1986, there were approximately 37,000 injuries due to lawnmower use seen in the ER.
  - In 2006, there were nearly 80,000 injuries due to lawnmower use.
- Injuries range from minor cuts and bruises to amputations and even death.
- Most injuries are the result of human error to include:
  - Lack of familiarity with the mower
  - Loss of control of the mower
  - Operating in poor conditions
  - Operating in the vicinity of other people
  - Improper clothing
  - Allowing children to operate equipment
- Majority of the injuries occur in children under the age of 15 years and adults aged 60 years or older.

Choosing the Right Mower

- Select a machine that is suitable for the job. Ask a retailer or dealer for assistance.
  - **Push Mowers:** Used to mow lawns ½ acre or smaller
  - **Riding Mowers:** Used to mow lawns ½ to 1 acre
  - **Lawn Tractors:** Used for areas between 1 and 2 acres
  - **Garden Tractors:** Used for areas greater than 2 acres
- Remember to ask these questions:
  - Who will be using the machine most? Will they tire easy?
  - Does the mower start easily?
  - Is it easy to operate? Are the controls within easy reach? Is the handle adjustable?
  - Do you want to vary the cutting height of the grass during the growing season? Consider the ease with which adjustments can be made.
  - Do you want a grass catcher or not? If not – does the mower have deflectors to eject objects toward the ground?
  - Can the user do mower maintenance or will the machine require a professional?

Lawnmower Safety Features

- **Operator Presence Control (OPC) System:** ensures that the blades come to a complete stop within three seconds after the blade control is released
- **Safety Interlocks:** ensures that engine will not start while mower is in gear or blades are engaged
- **Rear or Foot Shield:** ensures feet will not get caught in the blades
- **Grass Shoot Deflector:** ensures that objects will be thrown towards the ground not in the air toward people or places
- **Chute Warning Labels:** warns users to keep hands and feet away from the chute

General Lawnmower Safety Precautions

- Read the instruction manual before use. Learn not only about the safe operation of the machine but also how to stop the machine quickly.
- Before the summer season begins, perform a visual inspection of the machine. Perform the following if necessary:
  - Sharpen the blades
  - Clean the air filter and any debris from the air passages
  - Change the oil
  - Remove oil and greasy dust from the engine
  - Tighten the wheels
- Mow during daylight hours in good weather conditions. Avoid high heat.
- Never mow wet grass.
- Disengage the mower blade when moving on pavement, across walks, or on gravel lanes.
- Never leave a mower unattended.
- Never reach under the mower unless it is turned off and the blades have completely stopped turning.
- If the chute clogs, shut off the motor and wait for the blades to stop turning then clear it with a stick. Never clear a chute with your hands.
- Do not start or run a gasoline mower indoors.
- Do not teach or let small children operate a power mower.
- Store mowers in an area with minimal traffic and not accessible to children.

Before Starting a Lawnmower

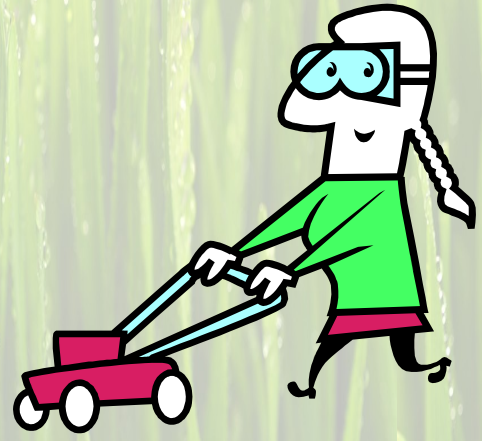
- Make sure the machine is on a level, solid surface and out of gear.
- Ensure discharge chute is directed away from people, pets, buildings, windows, and glass doors.
- Refuel the mower when the engine is cool.
  - Do not refuel the mower indoors.
  - Do not refuel while smoking.
  - Wipe any spilled gasoline immediately.
  - Do not fill the tank completely.
- Clean the lawn of children, pets, other people, and other objects such as sticks, branches, stones, and toys.
- Wear heavy duty shoes with non-slip sloes, long sleeves and pants that are not loose, and hearing and eye protection.
- Start mowers outdoors at least 25 feet from fuel point.
  - For a push mower: Stand firmly with feet shoulder width apart.
  - For a riding mower: Make sure you are fully seated.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning

- Starting or running a mower in an enclosed space can lead to Carbon Monoxide Poisoning.
- Carbon Monoxide is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas.
- It is absorbed into the bloodstream through the lungs. Leaving very little oxygen available for body tissues.
- Symptoms include weakness, nausea, headache, and visual problems. Death could also occur.
- If you experience any of the symptoms listed above, move immediately to fresh air and call a doctor or poison control center.
- To prevent Carbon Monoxide from accumulating, start or run the mower outdoors.

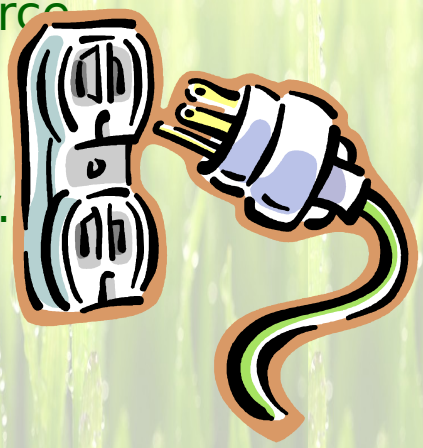
Safety Tips: Push Mowers

- Always push lawn mower in front of you. Never pull it.
- Mow across the slope – not up and down.
- Do not run with push mowers.
- Keep the mower flat. Never lift it.
- If using a push mower, be careful not to overdo your work capacity especially on hot days. Take frequent rest breaks.
- Stop the mower immediately if you hit an object. After turning it off, inspect the mower and repair any damage before restarting the machine.
- Push mower away from body during a fall.



Safety Tips: Electrical Mowers

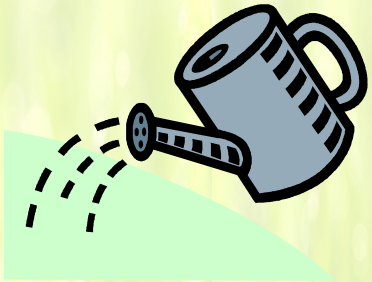
- Mow back and forth working away from power source.
- Ensure power cord is out of mowing path.
- Plug the mower into a 3-prong grounded outlet.
- Use a ground fault interrupter for maximum safety.
- Never use a cord that is cut or damaged.
- Always unplug the mower after each use.



Safety Tips: Riding Mowers

- Test ride the machine and become familiar with it before engaging the mower blade.
- Be sure the mower and transmission are disengaged before starting the engine. Take care not to throw the machine in gear accidentally and have it jerk ahead unexpectedly.
- Watch where you drive. Always look behind you for small children, pets, or obstructions before backing the mower.
- Do not carry passengers or tow passengers behind the mower.
- Mow up and down the slope. Reduce speed on all slopes and when making sharp turns. Avoid operating on steep slopes or near ditches.
- Remain seated while operating the mower and keep both feet on footrests. Do not attempt to operate the mower when not in driver’s seat.
- Turn off the engine and wait for the moving parts to stop before dismounting. Do not forget to remove the key!
- Be cautions – Mowers can tip over easily

Gardening Tips



- Warm up with light movement.
- Know your strengths and limitations. Do not overexert yourself.
- Work below shoulder level whenever possible. If work must be performed above shoulder level, rest after no more than 5 minutes.
- Vary your activity. Do not work too long in any one position.
- Avoid bending over repeatedly while standing upright. Get closer by kneeling or sitting on the ground.
- Use long handled tools to give leverage and avoid having to stoop. Grip hand tools lightly. Switch hands frequently.
- Bend at hips and knees when lifting objects. Carry objects close to body.
- Do not overexpose yourself to the sun. Utilize protective measures such as sunscreen and a wide brim hat. Use a sunscreen with at least an SPF of 15.
- Take regular rest breaks and drink plenty of fluids.
- Avoid working outdoors between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Safety Tips: Gardening Tools

- Tools such as rakes, spades, pruning clippers, chainsaws, leaf blowers, and chippers should not be left lying around when not in use. Store all tools out of the reach of children.
- When using power tools:
  - Read the instruction manual before use.
  - Inspect tools for frayed power cords and cracked or broken casings. Keep tools free of dirt, oil, and water.
  - Ensure power tools can be used outdoors. Make sure all outdoor electrical outlets are protected with ground fault circuit interrupters.
  - Never use tools in wet environments unless they are labeled “immersible”.
  - Before plugging in a tool, make sure the power switch is in the “OFF” position.
  - Use eye protection when using any power tool. Do not wear loose or dangling clothing, jewelry, or hair.
  - Unplug tools when not in use. Never carry a tool by its cord or yank on the cord to unplug it. Pull the plug – not the wire.
  - Coil up extension cords and store them for safe keeping after each use.
  - Never use power tools under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any medicines that can impair your vision, alertness, dexterity, or judgment.

Safety Tips: Ladders

- Visually inspect a ladder before using it. Keep ladders clean and free of dirt and grease.
- Use the one-to-four ratio when using a ladder. Place the ladder so its base is one foot away from what it leans against for every four feet in height.
- Make sure the ladder has a secure footing before climbing. Never lean a ladder against an unsafe backing such as loose boxes or barrels.
- Hold on with both hands and face the ladder when going up or down. Be sure that your shoes are not greasy, muddy, or slippery before you climb.
- Do not overreach or put one foot on the ladder and the other on an adjacent surface or object.
- Keep your belt buckle or belly button between the rails. Never stand on the braces, extension arms, paint shelf or top rung of a ladder.
- Never use a ladder in a horizontal position as a runway or scaffold.
- Do not splice short ladders together.
- Never leave a ladder unattended especially around children.
- Be especially careful when using a ladder on a windy day.
- When getting down , step – do not jump – from the ladder.

Hazardous Material Storage

- Read the label for storage directions.
- Store all hazardous materials such as pesticides and fertilizers in their original containers away from areas used by people or pets, near food, water, or animal feed. Labels contain the information for first aid treatment if necessary.
- Store hazardous materials on high shelves or inside locked cabinets. Keep them out of a child's reach.
- Use child resistant caps on dangerous products.
- Do not mix products unless specifically directed to so by the instructions. Mix products in an outdoor area away from areas used by family and pets. Label the mixture accordingly.
- Do not transfer to or mix products in food or drink containers which could be mistaken and the contents consumed.
- A small amount of gasoline and other products should be stored. Items should not be stored for greater than 6 months.
- Gasoline should be stored in an approved, vented metal contained. Never bring gasoline indoors or store near flammable materials such as pesticides.
- Consider substituting non-poisonous materials whenever possible.

Safety Tips: Pesticides

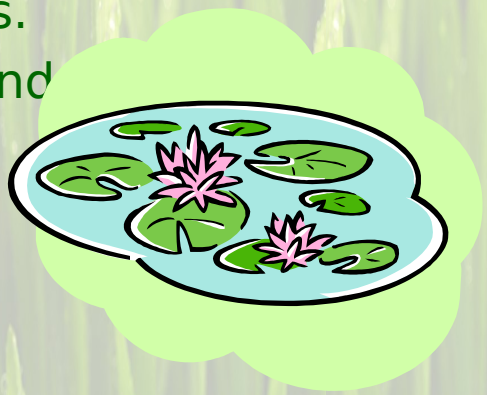
- Pesticides include the following:
  - Insecticides: Garden dusts, soap sprays, mosquito repellants, moth balls, ant and roach baits
  - Herbicides: Weed killers
  - Fungicides: Rose and flower sprays and treated seeds
  - Rodenticides: Mouse and rat bait stations
- Follow all label instructions and precautions about storage and use.
- Wear a long sleeve shirt with a tight collar tucked into long pants, shoes, socks, rubber gloves, and splash proof eyewear. Rubber boots and a respirator may also be required.
- Do not eat, drink, or use tobacco when working with pesticides.
- Before use, remove children and pets as well as toys from the area. Keep them away until the pesticide has dried or for as long as the label recommends.
- Make sure animals cannot get at bait products while they are in use. Do not spray pesticide products near pet food or water dishes.
- Wash hands thoroughly when finished.
- Do not spray products on a windy day.

Pesticide Poisoning

- It is estimated that 71, 000 children are involved in common household pesticide-related poisonings or exposures.
- Symptoms are similar to symptoms caused by other illnesses such as heat exhaustion, food poisoning, and asthma. Symptoms include:
  - Early symptoms: Fatigue, headache, nausea, and dizziness
  - Severe symptoms: Sweating, stomach cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, and blurred vision
- Never assume to induce vomiting.
- Read and maintain the label for emergency information.
- Contact your local poison control center or dial 911 when pesticide poisoning is suspected.
- Provide the label to the treating physician or the responding Emergency Medical Service personnel.

Safety Tips: Ponds

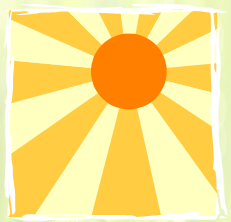
- The main risk posed by a pond is children falling in and drowning.
- If possible, avoid building a pond until children are at least 5 years old.
- If you have a pond:
  - Fill it in.
  - Position the pond where it can be seen from the house.
  - Design the pond with gently sloping edges.
  - Cover small ponds with a combination of heavy-duty wooden trellis and wire mesh. Safety grids are also available.
  - Put a fence around large ponds to limit access.
  - Grow plants around the deeper side of the pond



Conclusion

- Remember safety tips are only as good as the operator makes them.
- Choose the right tool or product for the job. Limit the amount of a product purchased.
- Follow all manufacturer instructions for use and storage.
- Inspect mowers and other tools periodically for potential hazards such as:
  - Loose belts
  - Missing or damaged guards
  - Accumulations of grass, leaves, or excessive grease to reduce fire hazard
  - Frayed or cut wires
- Limit a child's access to all gardening tools and maintenance products.
- Be ready to respond quickly in case of an emergency.

References:



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